

## Sentence Fragment

*Because the sense of the sentence, when a fragment occurs, is left hanging.*

A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence, and although they can be very effective in informal or creative writing, they are strongly discouraged in academic writing.

Sentence fragments sometimes occur when a sentence begins with a subordinate structure (because x happened, when y happens) but the writer forgets how the sentence began once the idea gets complicated.

*Except in the case of more informal writing, when the fragment is acceptable for emphasis or to give the impression of speed or spontaneity.*

That sentence was clearly intended to conclude with a main point such as “fragments are unacceptable,” but the writer’s fingers couldn’t keep up with the writer’s mind.

### Solutions

1. Turn the fragment into a complete sentence.

- *When a fragment occurs, the sense of the sentence is left hanging.*

2. Join the fragment to a sentence in its context to which it naturally connects.

The example above seems as if it might follow a sentence such as this one: “Academic writers should avoid sentence fragments.”

- *Academic writers should avoid sentence fragments, because when a fragment occurs, the sense of the sentence is left hanging.*

**Note:** if you choose to use a fragment, make sure its effect is obvious so it’s clear that it’s deliberate. Even so, you may find some academic readers object.

- *The effects of the war were horrific on the economy and on the civilian population. And on the soldiers themselves, even those who survived.*

Making the last of the three elements a fragment draws attention to it, in a way that the conventional structure (below) doesn’t.

- *The effects of the war were horrific on the economy, the civilian population, and the soldiers themselves, even those who survived.*